



News Release

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Public Health Reminds Utahns of the Value of Vaccines

(Salt Lake City, UT) - The Utah Department of Health wants to remind Utahns that the smallpox vaccine is just one tool in public health's arsenal of disease protection; there are a variety of other routine adult vaccinations that offer protection from other deadly diseases. Each year in the United States, more than 30,000 adults die from vaccine preventable diseases or their complications, which today's vaccines can easily prevent. Immunization is a very simple and effective way to prevent serious illness and death in adults, and is one of the safest and most cost-effective preventive measures available. Vaccines can reduce the spread of disease, reduce absences in the workplace and decrease the use of expensive therapies and hospitalizations to treat illnesses like influenza and pneumonia.

Vaccinations need to occur throughout our life span-- not just in childhood. The greatest vaccine-preventable disease burden for the U.S. population today is among adults. An estimated average of 23,000 persons, primarily 65 and older, die from complications of influenza illness during epidemics. More than 10,000 more die from pneumococcal infections annually. Hepatitis B causes another 4,000 to 5,000 adult deaths each year. "We have safe, effective, but highly under-utilized vaccines that can help us reduce the \$10 billion a year in societal and medical costs brought about by vaccine-preventable diseases in adults," says Linda Abel, UDOH Immunization Manager.

Vaccines are available to protect adults against diseases such as tetanus, diphtheria, hepatitis A and B, measles, mumps, rubella, chickenpox, pneumonia and influenza.

Certain individuals are particularly at risk of infection for influenza and pneumonia, including those with chronic medical conditions such as diabetes, asthma, heart and lung disease, HIV infection, cancer, individuals undergoing immunosuppressive therapy and the elderly (>65 years). Also, when planning a trip abroad, specific vaccines may be necessary to prevent diseases that occur in other countries and can be transported back to the United States.

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Adult vaccination plays an important role in keeping us healthy – every day! For more information about adult immunizations, contact your health care provider, local health department or the Utah Immunization Hotline at 1-800-275-0659 or <http://www.immunize-utah.org/default.htm>.

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